

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

MONMOUTH
112 Village Center Drive
Freehold, NJ 07728-2510
(732) 780-3035

OCEAN
405 Route 539
Plumsted, NJ 08514-2303
(609) 286-2571; (732) 350-2300

MERCER
4573 South Broad Street
Hamilton, NJ 08620-2215
(609) 585-7878

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SENIOR MEMBER, FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN, AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE

WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SUBCOMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

CO-CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

‘Pet Treats and Processed Chicken: Concern for American Consumers, Pets’

*Excerpts of Remarks by U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04)
Co-Chairman, Congressional-Executive Commission on China
Congressional hearing
June 17, 2014*

Welcome to our distinguished witnesses to this hearing on the important issue of the safety of our food imports from China. This is the second hearing on food safety that the Commission has done in the past year. I want to thank the staff of this commission for their work to raise awareness about this issue, as well as other human rights, rule of law, and governance issues.

The safety of food, feed, and drugs from China are a cause for real concern. American consumers are rightly anxious.

We have pet treats that may have sickened and/or killed pets, a virus may decimate 10% of American pigs, possibly from vitamins or feed from China, and we have food products, including processed chicken--that does not have to be labeled as being “Made in China. In fact, some may even be labeled “Made in America.”

I want to thank Mr. Chris D’Urso for bringing this last issue to my attention. The maze of labels and labeling requirements, called “country-of-origin” labeling, makes it difficult for American consumers to make reasoned choices about the food they eat or feed their pets.

Christopher D’Urso is one of the most outstanding young men that I have ever encountered. Not only did he achieve perfect SAT scores, is ranked number 1 in his class with a 5.3 GPA, but his record of public service at such a young age is rare. Last year he met with me and my staff and shared his research and findings regarding country of origin labeling laws for the United States. The thoroughness and level of understanding of such a complex and international issue was impressive. Chinese imports are increasing, and many U.S. companies

will purchase materials or products in China and assemble them here. Americans may not know what they are getting, and this poses significant health risks especially with food products, dietary supplements, or generic drugs.

Having researched this issue since 2012, Chris rightly pointed to the inadequacies of current laws and the fact that consumers have the right to know the country of origin of products, especially when ingested. I believe his future contribution to his community, country, and even beyond will be significant.

On the issue of food safety, both Chinese and American consumers share serious concerns about food products made in China. It is an area where we hope there can be more cooperation, accountability, and transparency in the future.

This past week was Food Safety Awareness Week in China. China's food industry has faced a real crisis of confidence over the past seven years. Despite government efforts, the number of scandals continue to keep coming. Meat that glows in the dark, exploding watermelons, 40 tons of beans sprouts containing antibiotics, rice contaminated with heavy metals, mushrooms soaked with bleach, and pork so filled with stimulants that athletes were told not to eat it lest they test positive for banned substances.

All of this on top of melamine-tainted milk powder that sickened 300,000 children in 2007. In response to that scandal, China passed its first-ever food safety law. Nevertheless, as we all know well, there is often a gap between what a Chinese law says and how it is enforced. China is still struggling to keep its food supply healthy.

The Chinese government is trying to crack down, recently closing 5,000 food-producing businesses and arresting over 2,000 people — but experts on food safety say a needlessly complex bureaucracy and fierce determination to turn a profit means that there will continue to be food safety scares and a Chinese public wary of its food supply.

One would think that this issue would be solved already if China transferred resources to food safety from censoring the internet and cracking down on free speech and political dissent. Unfortunately, the Chinese government still seems to want safe pork but a silent public.

There is a direct connection between better human rights conditions in China and food safety. While China has had impressive economic growth for decades, it lags behind in ensuring the rights of its citizens, and in developing transparency, official accountability, the rule of law, things it sorely needs to tackle the issue of food safety.

Transparency is absolutely necessary for any government to protect the health of its citizens and to effectively manage problems related to food and drug safety. Free speech, a free press, and freedom of association would allow crusading journalists and civil society to expose health scandals and work toward open solutions.

Those who try to skirt the law for profit would be exposed and citizens could work together, with their government, to ensure better and healthier food and water. A free press--and "muckraking" journalists--certainly helped to bring better food safety in the United States.

It may be tempting to say that China is on a learning curve that will eventually produce better food safety. That just may be the case. The problem is that Chinese products don't stay in China. They are traded around the world, and increasingly they are sold here.

U.S. trade policy must put the health and safety of U.S. consumers and their pets as its top priority. Safety before profits is the message that has to be sent to producers, processors, and manufacturers. If U.S. inspections are blocked or delayed, for any reason, we should consider swiftly pulling products from shelves.

In addition, the U.S. must ask that authorities in China are held accountable for implementing and enforcing laws on the food and drug safety and public health. The U.S. should be negotiating, as part of its diplomatic relations, better and smarter inspections, transparency in the food-supply chain, and closer collaboration between our food-safety experts. Our labeling of food and feed products must be clear so consumers know what they are buying and from where it comes. Lastly, the U.S. must continue to make human rights a top priority of U.S-China relations—free speech and an active civil society would do much to ensure safer food and expose corruption.

With this hearing we hope to raise the visibility of these issues, gather information and recommendations from experts and advocates, and work with our colleagues here in Congress to make our food safer and to protect our pets, our farmers, and our children from unsafe products.